

2015 BUDGET SUBCOMMITTEE QUESTIONS

PROGRAM PERFORMANCE

- a. Do you have defined outcomes or measurements for your program(s)? What are they and are these measures listed somewhere so the public can see them?

Yes, AMP is the Iowa Foster Care Youth Council and funded by the Department of Human Services. The Department has the following outcomes:

1.3.2 Performance Measures

Performance measures and targets are included as part of this contract and will be used to assess the Contractor's performance towards meeting the desired results. The performance measures and targets included are the minimum performance expectations. If the methods or definitions in the performance measures need clarification, the agency and the contractor may determine definitions and methods in collaboration, with the agency providing final approval. The performance, as indicated below, shall be monitored by the contractor and performance reported semi-annually in the semi-annual report (scope of Work Section 1.3.1.5) and will drive certain questions on the youth survey (scope of Work Section 1.3.1.5.2). At minimum, the results of this contract are:

1. Performance Measure 1: Youth will develop an improved support system.

- a. At least 80% of participants report the council has informed them about supports and services, as indicated by survey response.

Answer: Of 155 responses, 154 (99.4%) of youth surveyed rated AMP on informing them of supports and services available to them from average to excellent.

Goal achieved.

Source: AMP Semi-Annual Youth Survey Report December 2014 - ATTACHED

At least 80% of participants report the youth council, when surveyed by the contractor, report the council staff understand the Foster Care System.

Answer: Of 152 responses, 149 (98%) of the youth surveyed rated their facilitator from average to excellent on understanding the Foster Care system.

Goal achieved.

Source: AMP Semi-Annual Youth Survey Report December 2014 - ATTACHED

2. Performance Measure 2: Youth will contribute to improvements in the Child Welfare System.

- a. Youth participation in the council will increase during each contract year by at least five percent:

During the negotiation process, the agreed upon baseline was: July 2011, 176 youth attending.

Through June 2012: AMP served 2,809* youth.

Through June 2013: AMP served 3,399* youth (590 youth increase or 17% increase)

Through June 2014: AMP served 3,877* youth (478 youth increase or 12% increase)

Through December 2014: AMP served 2544* youth.

600 youth are new to AMP in the first six months of fiscal year 2014-2015. That makes 23.5% of attendees NEW to AMP in this fiscal year.

Goal Achieved.

*This number does include duplicated youth if they attend both meetings per month.

2128 (total number of youth attending MEETINGS 7-1-14 to 12-31-14);

137 (total MEETINGS held in first six months) = 19 youth attending/meeting which meets contract requirements.

Goal achieved.

Source: AMP Attendance Report

- b. MEASUREMENT: The Contractor will measure participation using local council meeting sign-in sheets and will utilize previous year average council participation as a baseline.**
Beginning in January 2013, the sign-in sheet noted new youth attending.

In FY 2012-2013, a total of 711 NEW youth attended meetings. 3,399 total youth attended meetings. 275 meetings were held. This makes the average attendance 12.3 youth/meeting.
 $711 \text{ NEW youth} / 275 \text{ meetings} = 2.6 \text{ NEW youth/meeting (on average)}$.

In FY 2013-2014, a total of 627 NEW youth attended meetings. 3,877 total youth attended meetings. 270 meetings were held. This makes the average attendance 14.4 youth/meeting.
 $627 \text{ NEW youth} / 270 \text{ meetings} = 2.3 \text{ NEW youth/meeting (on average)}$.

In one half of FY 2014-2015, a total of 600 NEW youth attended AMP. 2544 total youth participated in AMP events. 137 meetings were held in the first 6 months. Average Attendance is 19 youth for this time period.

Goal Achieved for partial year.

AMP is committed to getting all councils (not just the required six) to average a ten youth/meeting attendance. Factors impacting the councils above that have less than a ten youth average are: new council facilitator, movement of council meeting site, loss of transportation grant that picked up youth and brought them to council meetings, and decrease in the number of youth placed in that area of Iowa.

3. Performance Measure 3: Youth Development

- a. More than 50% of youth will experience a leadership role during the contract year, as indicated by a Contractor administered youth survey question, "In the past year, has the Council given you at least one experience where you practiced leadership?"**

Of 156 responses, 151 youth reported average to excellent Leadership Opportunities for youth in AMP. That is 96.79%.

In a direct question, "Has AMP given you at least one experience where you practiced leadership in the past year?" 59.5% answered "yes", and 15 said "no". That left 25.5% of youth were not sure as we did not define "practiced leadership." As a follow-up clarifying analysis, the survey broke out the youth answers based on time in AMP. It was learned (and graphed in the actual report) "*those that had been involved for a short period of time (less than two months or this being their first meeting) were those who indicated that they were "Not Sure."* Quote from the AMP Survey Report attached.

Goal Achieved.

Source: AMP Semi-Annual Youth Survey Report December 2014 - ATTACHED

4. Performance Measure 4: Permanency

- a. At least 80% of participants will identify a Significant Adult Relationship during the Contract year.**

Please see the youth survey report.

"Do you have at least one significant, positive relationship with an adult through AMP?"

151 youth answered this question.

59.7% of youth answered "yes" to the question, 14.9% said "no" and 25.3% were "undecided".

The Youth Policy Institute of Iowa reanalyzed the answer based on length of time in AMP and the re-graphed the results. In the clarifying graph 22 youth answered “no” and of those, 11 of the youth had been with AMP less than 2 months, 8 youth between 2 and 12 months with AMP and 3 with AMP more than one year. This accounts for 14.6% of the youth that need to be connected with and 18% of youth that are not sure of the relationship.

100% minus 14.6% “no” answers still makes the goal achieved at 85.4% but...AMP is aware the many definitions of “positive” and “relationship” are hindering clear answers to this question; added to this are the many variables within the youth’s world that we do not have knowledge of. AMP Leaders will make a clearer effort to reach out in more ways to make the intent of the relationship clear and positive in the future.

Goal achieved.

Source: AMP Semi-Annual Youth Survey Report December 2014 - ATTACHED

Complete AMP bi-annual reports and all supporting documentation are posted on the AMP Website for all to access. www.ampiowa.org.

- b. What data is available to show Iowans that your program(s) are an effective investment of taxpayer dollars? Where can Iowans find this data?

In addition to the full Bi-Annual DHS report submitted in January and July each year; AMP has 2 separate evaluations completed by outside sources. The first is completed by the Youth Policy Institute of Iowa and called the Satisfaction Survey. This documents what the youth are gaining from AMP and how they are connecting to the community around them. The second is the PAAT, prepared by the Research Institute for Studies in Education, Iowa State University. This tool also analyzes the youth’s internalizing of the skills taught and how they can be applied. The benefit of both of these tools is to demonstrate that Iowa’s money is directly serving the youth and they are utilizing resources available to them.

All reports are available on our website www.ampiowa.org or at the YSS AMP office, 125 S. 3rd street, Ames, IA 50010.

- c. Can you provide the committee with performance data for your programs over the last 5 or 10 years?

All AMP Performance data (since July 2011 when Youth & Shelter Services became our Lead Agency) is Available either on our website or at our AMP office.

Prior to July 2011, AMP was known as ELEVATE and our host agency was Children and Families of Iowa in Des Moines. They will have all the bi-annual ELEVATE reports with our performance data. In short, we have achieved or excelled in all the measures since our start up with DeCat funds in 2005.

PROGRAM EFFICIENCY

- a. Have you examined what other states are doing to improve performance and reduce costs?

AMP is partnered with FOSTER YOUTH IN ACTION (FYA) which is a conglomeration of 10 states who work individually and as a group to advance youth voice nationally and locally. FYA hold monthly conference calls so we all remain current on each other's activities.

b. Can you share with the committee what other states are doing?

Currently, Florida, California and Iowa have set Legislative agendas for their states and we work together to educate and advance legislation in our states. The other states are not still organizing and establishing their state goals with their youth. Nationally, Iowa is more advanced in our work as we have Senator Grassley, an AMP advocate! When he has foster care impacting legislation before him or he is in need of writing some, he connects with AMP and Iowa youth for ideas and suggestions. Most recently, HR 4980 was passed. Nationally, they are recognizing the dangers of system youth being trafficked. This legislation encourages education and intervention for these and other youth.

c. Which of these ideas are you considering for implementation here in Iowa?

Iowa will put in effect the requirements of HR 4980.

Other ideas:

1. Funding a Subsidized Guardianship program (legislation passed with no funding). 31 other states have this option for youth.
 2. Following recommendations from the American Bar Association – Judges need to not allow youth under age 16 to be classified APPLA (Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement) as this stops workers from identifying homes/families for kids and youth. This classification limits Court involvement and basically means the youth will coast out into adulthood with no commitments. This is recognized as unhealthy for youth on a National and State level but changes still need to happen to remove this option from our Courts.
 3. There are many more human trafficking needs coming to light as survivors are speaking out and asking for help/resources to get out of the life. Iowa needs a specialized task force trained in Trafficking like we have a Drug Task Force. Specially trained officers handle cases with more efficiency and greater success which saves taxpayer funds. Add to this the fact that cases handled well are easier to prosecute and we have a win/win for Iowa. Federal legislation will be coming for many Urban Areas as they have identified numbers to report. Here in Iowa, we have human trafficking but our numbers look different due to our officers having more strict charges they could apply so our data is not as accurate. HR 4980 will fix this for statistics and our Iowa Legislature in 2014 fixed the charges and made them felonies.
 4. There are a number of bills for human rights that AMP is watching for our LGBTQ youth and those facing bullying. WE have to have legislation that creates safety! AMP supports the current bills under consideration in Iowa. WE thank our Legislators for the improvements made to last year's bill, primarily the new qualifiers on parental notification requirements. Sensitivity is critical! Our Legislators heard this! AMP is grateful.
- d. Are there websites or organizations we could go to obtain more information on what other states' programs are doing to provide more efficient services?

The Foster Youth in Action website has a goal to get this up and running but as of today it is not there yet. AMP collects national newsletters from youth service bureaus and legislators. We

will follow any legislation pertaining to: foster care, adoption, kinship, juvenile delinquent, children in need of assistance etc. I just enter key words and sign up for as much information as I can that I make sure AMP Facilitators get to their council youth.

- e. Do you have an email address or a comment section on your website where Iowans can suggest improvements to your program or agency?

Yes, we do and it works very well. We get great feedback and appreciate all those that take the time to contact us.

PROGRAM DUPLICATION

- a. Are there any other programs that are providing the same or similar services?

No, AMP is unique for this population. We look at our role as that of an advocate and family member. Many of the AMP youth do not know the skills/resources we are connecting them to as they are frequently still in trauma when peers their age are learning these skills/resources. AMP is open to youth age 13 and up. AMP assists till they are stable, responsible and well-informed adults. AMP stays involved, when their DHS/JCO workers close cases. AMP does not have clients, we have voluntary participants that ask for the skills/resources we are connecting them to.

- b. Is there a reason why we need more than one program providing the same or similar service?

No. AMP is a unique program but it meets the needs of the population well.

- c. Have you had any discussions with the other agencies or programs to find ways to maximize the use of the taxpayer's dollars?

AMP is a tightly run program with a frugal perspective when spending. We stretch every dollar as all staff and many of our youth are taxpayers. We have used funds to advocate for youth voice by reaching the youth where they are at. Our partnership agencies are local in their communities and thus have donations our youth access as well as opportunities for AMP youth to give back. AMP youth know their giving back is crucial for AMP success and they are both internally and financially awarded for their work with a small gift card.

- d. Are there any laws or administrative rules that would limit your ability to work with the other programs or departments?

None that we are aware of.

AMP is a collaboration of 10 agencies with another 7 being reached by mobile facilitators going the extra mile to reach more youth in their communities. When invited, AMP youth make every effort to attend and assist other groups and vice-versa. AMP has connections to SIYAC, The Iowa Youth Congress, Insight, Youth in Action to name a few. Add to this the faith-based youth organizations and many adult organizations like IFAPA and Iowa KidsNet.

- e. Are there any laws or administrative rules that could be changed to make your program or agency work better?

Yes and no.

AMP has a Legislative Agenda each year that encompasses ideas from youth in all 16 councils – we compile the ideas then send them back out for a final vote on the top 5. Please see the agendas we have attached to this question and answer form.

If you can take the time to look at the youth ideas, you can see that each idea on the agenda will improve the lives of MANY youth; not just a few. They are valid suggestions that will make the system better for those in it.

OTHER

- a. Would it be a burden to your agency to ask that your presentations be delivered to the Legislative Services Agency 48 hours in advance of your appearance before the committee?

No. We will do this. Thank you for asking! We appreciate the opportunity to present AMP to you. This is a program IOWA can be proud of. Nationally, AMP is well known.

- b. If you are required to reduce your budget by 1%, 5%, or 10%, where would you suggest we focus our attention?

Of course we want no reductions but if we face one, the only place in our budget we can cut is travel we use to get to the youth. We hope this does not happen as that will reduce the number of youth voices we can gather. Our overhead costs are below what DHS allows for its contracted programs.

- c. What can be done to continue to promote high-quality, long-lasting placements?

Per our Legislative agenda, they youth would like better trained foster parents for teen placements. This means the homes that take teens need more skills for managing traumatized youth. These homes also need information on LGBTQ youth and how to be a safe place for these youth to live and grow. Too many have faced displacement and bullying from families and peers, they do not need more from resource families.

Many adults have called for more targeted, teen focused training. WE think a good curriculum with a staggered time line to attend it would directly benefit both the homes and the youth placed. Placement stability is an outcome we want for both foster and adopted youth.

Finally, AMP has a goal to decrease the number of adoption disruptions. A DVD has been developed and is available if you would like a copy. It will be added to the website later in 2015. Please visit our AMP Website and see the DVD's, art, poetry and journey's youth have chosen to share. It is impressive.

Thank you for these questions, AMP youth and staff are always willing to answer more or share more as needed with our Legislators who have listened to us and role-model serve so well.

Ruth I. E. Buckels, LMSW

AMP Statewide Coordinator

rbuckels@yssa.ames.ia.us